

JULIE LASSA

Testimony on Senate Bill 53
Senate Committee on Economic Development and Veterans and Military Affairs
October 5, 2011
9:05 AM
201 Southeast

Thank you, Chairman Leibham and fellow committee members, for holding a public hearing today on Senate Bill 53. Wisconsin has a proud history of providing some of the best veterans benefits to the men and women who answered our country's call to serve in the military. This is as it should be, since we owe a great debt to these individuals. When I introduced this bill in April, it was intended to modify the way veterans tuition remission benefits under the Wisconsin GI Bill were calculated. A portion of the bill ends the requirement that Post 9/11 federal education benefits count against Wisconsin GI Bill tuition remission benefits.

With changes to statutes approved earlier this year, veterans may now use their Wisconsin GI benefits after any Post 9/11 federal benefits they may qualify for, thereby extending their educational opportunities by a full eight semesters or 128 credits. That provision of SB 53 is now moot, since this issue has already been addressed. However, one element of SB 53 is still very relevant, and it is the focus of a substitute amendment to SB 53 that I have distributed to committee members.

The appropriation through which the Higher Education Aids Board reimburses the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System for the cost of the veterans tuition remission is currently set at just under \$6.5 million annually. For fiscal year 2010, the cost of the program to both the UW and Tech Colleges was just over \$23.5 million, leaving a funding gap of more than \$17 million. This means that for the most part only a small portion of the state's population, college and tech college students and their families, are contributing to pay for this valuable veterans program through their tuition. As I'm sure you will agree, the veterans of this state didn't just defend the liberty of these students and their families - they stood up to defend all of us in this state. We all benefit equally from the sacrifices these brave men and women made in the service of their country, and all of us ought to share equally in providing these veterans with the educational benefits they deserve.

These benefits are especially important now, as veterans face unemployment rates substantially higher than the rest of the population. As we know, when people are out of work, they often go back to school to gain new skills and credentials in an effort to improve their



employability. Budget cuts and increased enrollments are already straining the capacity of our higher education institutions, leading to higher tuition costs and longer waiting lists in high-demand programs. Therefore, because unemployment disproportionately impacts veterans, capacity issues at colleges and universities will impact veterans disproportionately as well.

The substitute amendment to SB 53 rectifies this issue by taking measured steps toward fully funding the tuition remission benefits of the Wisconsin GI Bill. It does so by changing the reimbursement appropriation to the Higher Education Aids Board from a sum certain to a sum sufficient appropriation. That appropriation has a graduated cap that increases by \$3 million per fiscal year until 2016, at which time the appropriation will become fully sum sufficient.

Wisconsin has long been a pioneer and a national leader in providing support for its veterans. One of the cornerstones of that support is our commitment to help those who committed their lives to our country's defense transition back to civilian life when they come home. The Wisconsin GI Bill helps us fulfill that commitment to our veterans. You will hear today about the effectiveness of this program, and how veterans and their families are using it to fulfill their education goals. Because all Wisconsin citizens are safe and free thanks to the sacrifices of our veterans, all Wisconsin citizens should support the Wisconsin GI Bill, and SB 53 will help make that happen.



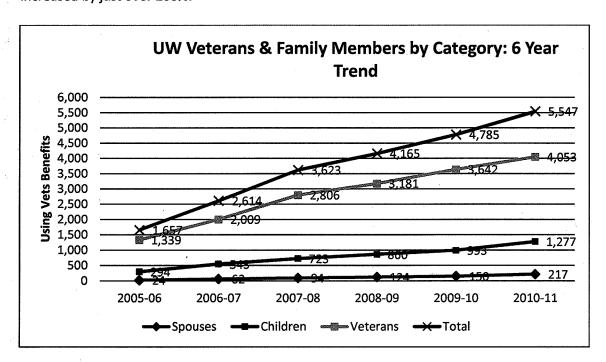
Senate Economic Development and Veterans & Military Affairs Committee October 5th Public Hearing

Wisconsin GI Bill Background

Through the Wisconsin GI Bill, the State of Wisconsin offers one of the most generous education benefits for veterans and their families in the country. Started in the fall of 2005, eligible veterans began receiving full remission of tuition and fees in 2007. Children and spouses of Wisconsin veterans determined to be 30% or more disabled also receive 100% remission of tuition and fees.

Use

The number of veterans and their families accessing benefits at UW institutions has more than **tripled** since the WI GI Bill program started in fiscal year 2006. The number of children has increased by **over 300%** and the number of spouses has gone up by more than 800%. The number of veterans has increased by just **over 200%**.



<u>Costs</u>

In 2010-11 the UW System remitted \$16.2 million in tuition and fees. In addition campuses provided supplemental payments totaling \$1.9 million. The state, through a \$6.5 million appropriation in the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) that supports both the UW and the WTCS reimbursed the UW System \$4.7 million for the tuition and fee remissions and the supplemental payment costs. The HEAB reimbursement covered only 17% of the cost of the tuition & fee remissions. In the UW System, the remaining 83% of remission costs was supported by \$13.5 million in tuition revenue from all students, including nonveteran students, who pay tuition and fees.

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The Federal Post-9/11 GI Bill

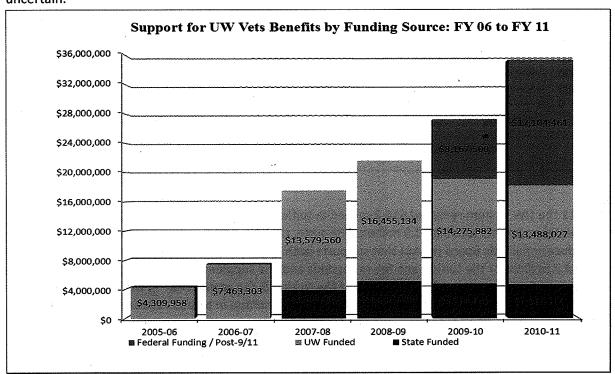
The Post-9/11 GI Bill, also known as the New GI Bill, was passed by Congress in 2008 but was not used by large numbers of student veterans nationwide until the spring 2010 semester. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most significant expansion of veterans' education benefits since the original GI Bill was passed near the end of World War II. Veterans with at least 90 days of active duty service after September 11, 2001 are eligible for anywhere from 40% to 100% of the full Post-9/11 benefit. Stated simply, a full Post-9/11 benefit will pay for student's tuition, fees, housing and books at public institutions.

Interaction of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Wisconsin GI Bill

In an effort to decrease the amount of unreimbursed tuition and fee remissions under the Wisconsin GI Bill, Governor Doyle and the Legislature passed a provision in the 2009-11 Biennial Budget that required Post-9/11 eligible students to apply for and use the Post-9/11. Veterans and family members who were not eligible for the Post 9/11 GI Bill, but eligible for the Wisconsin GI Bill, were not impacted by this requirement. This effort was made to capture Wisconsin's fair share of federal dollars. In order to hold student veterans who use Post-9/11 veterans benefits harmless from a potential financial loss the 2009-11 Biennial Budget also required a supplemental payment be made to veterans for the difference between the value of their Post 9/11 benefits and another federal benefit they have used --typically the benefit given up is Montgomery GI Bill.

Complete Funding Picture for UW Veterans Benefits

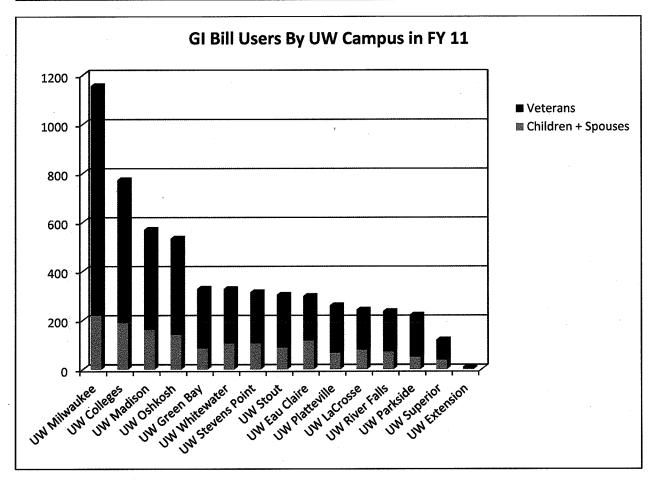
Federal revenue from the Post-9/11 GI Bill has stabilized the portion of unreimbursed costs that the UW System supports, but the use of benefits continues to rise and continued federal participation is uncertain.



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Total Tuition & Fee Remissions by UW Campus: FY 06 to FY 11

	FY 05-06	<u>FY 06-07</u>	FY 07-08	FY 08-09	<u>FY 09-10</u>	<u>FY 10-11</u>
Milwaukee	982,560	1,747,049	4,443,336	5,676,306	4,939,829	4,276,492
Madison	754,479	1,179,982	2,560,421	3,088,140	2,506,457	1,952,666
Oshkosh	320,624	548,819	1,281,375	1,608,030	1,618,312	1,547,884
Green Bay	222,275	337,150	836,455	1,179,379	1,128,198	1,000,319
Eau Claire	265,215	496,562	868,754	1,095,648	1,039,137	987,819
Whitewater	231,443	525,544	1,173,637	1,340,021	1,214,446	962,929
Colleges	402,325	639,153	1,444,233	1,795,077	1,397,466	939,145
Stevens Point	157,111	316,080	991,902	1,213,465	1,062,162	920,820
Stout	348,381	440,957	855,711	1,013,203	1,065,018	896,817
LaCrosse	175,985	382,524	851,730	950,418	833,792	716,518
Platteville	175,648	337,757	741,332	923,907	738,292	697,577
River Falls	40,582	157,998	479,266	578,062	482,872	545,740
Parkside	166,038	228,360	679,247	770,944	674,639	495,909
Superior	70,437	123,034	262,993	329,063	323,773	283,659
Extension	0	1,639	18,767	11,172	16,132	9,098
	4,313,102	7,462,606	17,489,160	21,572,833	19,040,524	16,233,393



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UW Activities and Events for Veterans in 2010-2011:

Examples of UW Service to Veterans Statewide

Systemwide 5

- 1) UW System launched an extensive Veterans Wisconsin Education Portal (http://veterans.wisconsin.edu/) to welcome veterans home and make it as easy as possible for to access benefits, make the transition from military service to college, and find the right fit from among Wisconsin's public colleges and universities. (2011, ongoing)
- 2) LZ Lambeau: UW Extension through Wisconsin Public Television was a key sponsor of LZ Lambeau, an event celebrating our Vietnam vets. In May 2010 70,000 vets, family members and friends attended three days of reunions, exhibits and activities at Lambeau Field, the Austin Straubel Airport, and at museums around Green Bay. (2010)
- 3) Vietnam War Stories Project: UW Extension through WPT features dozens of veterans from all regions of Wisconsin who reflect on their memories of the Vietnam War and their experiences during and after the war. The Emmy winning documentary and extensive web site honor the service and sacrifice of thousands of Vietnam veterans, and finally, formally, thank them and welcome them home. (2010, ongoing)
- 4) Benefits: UW institutions are now serving over 4,000 veterans and nearly 1,500 children and spouses. Each veteran, child and spouse with benefits goes through a separate intake process to gather information on their military history, individual benefit eligibility, course history and academic plans. The interaction of state and federal veterans' benefits requires an extraordinary level of coordination and effort between Veterans Certifying Officials and the Financial Aid, Registrar, Bursar and Academic Advising Offices on campus. (Ongoing)
- 5) Hold Harmless / Supplemental Payments: To protect veterans from the potential loss of benefits under the federal Post-9/11 program campuses paid out over \$1.9 million in hold harmless payments in FY 11. Calculating supplemental payments is an extraordinarily labor intensive and technically complex task that is done up to 4 times a year for every veteran eligible for a supplemental payment. (Ongoing)
- 6) Statewide Committee on Veterans Issues (SCOVI): The UW System brings together representatives from WDVA, the Tech Colleges, student veteran organizations and campus staff to investigate and share issues related to student veterans in the UW. SCOVI recommends appropriate policy, shares best practices and innovative programs that enhance the recruitment, retention, and successful graduation of student veterans. (Ongoing)
- 7) UW Veterans Certifying Officials Meetings: The UW System convenes a System wide meeting of campus based veterans certifying officials every other month to identify state and federal benefit issues and monitor veterans benefit data collection, data reporting and payment issues. (Ongoing)
- 8) UW Veterans Certifying Officials host an intensive 2 day workshop at the Wisconsin Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (WACROA) meeting every June. How best to serve student veterans in the face of continually changing federal and state benefits is the overarching theme. (Annual)

The following UW institutions were named 2010-2011 Military Friendly Schools by the G.I. Jobs web site. GI Jobs recognizes schools which are doing the most to embrace America's veterans as students based on financial and non-financial criteria including efforts to recruit and retain military and veteran students, results in recruiting military and veteran students and academic accreditations. UW System intuitions receiving this recognition in 2010-11 were: UW-La Crosse; UW-Eau Claire; UW-Milwaukee; UW-Platteville; UW-Superior; UW-Green Bay; UW-La Crosse; UW-Madison; UW-Oshkosh; UW River Falls; UW-Stevens Point and UW-Whitewater.

UW-Eau Claire

1) UW- Eau Claire hired a full time benefits coordinator and program manager to not only certify enrollment for veteran benefits but to also advocate for veteran's needs via multiple avenues.

2) UW Eau Claire hosted a You Served--We Care Student Veterans Conference in February 2011, to provide forum for professionals who serve student veterans in the higher education and for student veterans from across the state and to gather to share ideas and discuss issues affecting veterans. Conference sessions focused on military education benefits, the value of military experience in career planning and navigating the VA medical system. (2011)

3) UW Eau Claire established the UW-Eau Claire Veterans Center in their student union to provide a meeting place on campus for veteran students, faculty and staff, to honor them for their service to the country and to be a place of welcome for veterans on campus. Veterans Services Office has hired a Veteran student for a summer 2011 internship in their office. The Veteran student will create and plan a programming calendar of events to take place in the center each month of the 2011-2012 academic year. (2011)

4) UW-Eau Claire hosts a federal Veterans Administration Telehealth station to provide mental health counseling and case management to veterans and lessen the need to travel to VA medical centers.

UW-Green Bay

- 1) UW-Green Bay hosts an Annual Chancellor Veteran Reception with dynamic speakers, refreshments and door prizes. This is the Chancellor's chance (along with the community) to personally welcome back students who have been deployed and say thanks to all veterans in the community. We also have varied displays during the reception including the Wisconsin Traveling Wall (pictures all Wisconsin residents who have given the ultimate sacrifice in the latest conflicts), Cammo for Quilt Project, POW table and music from our talented music students.
- 2) UW-Green Bay schedules regular Student Information Sessions for our students to update them on veteran benefit changes.

3) UW-Green Bay hosts an annual State Veteran Benefit Open House for our area.

4) UW-Green Bay donates/collects items for Vets for Vets care package project each Fall to send to military personnel on active duty.

UW-La Crosse

- 1) UW-La Crosse ranted ranked 98 out the top 100 Best for Vets colleges nationally by Military Times Magazine for financial assistance, academic flexibility, and campus culture and support services. (2010)
- 2) UW-La Crosse offers a separate orientation program for veterans titled From Combat to College annually.

UW-Madison

1) UW-Madison created a high profile assistant dean for veterans and ombudsman services in response to a growing enrollment of veterans returning from active duty and taking advantage of educational benefits. The dean is also key point of contact for deployed military service members to lessen the impact of rapid deployment, separation, re-entry and relocation. (2008, ongoing)

2) UW-Madison professor John Hall has received national attention for a global affairs and military history courses that bring veterans into the classroom to open eyes, increase diversity and dispel stereotypes.

UW-Milwaukee

- 1) UW-Milwaukee holds an Annual Benefits Open House for students, vets, and the community that connects participants to both federal and state agencies and the services that they offer for veterans and dependents.
- 2) The UW-Milwaukee 2011 Annual Veterans Day Recognition event that featured a student panel and VIP speakers including LTC Bob Humphrey, Deputy Commander, Ft. McCoy, Dr. Michael McBride, noted VA Psychologist, and Mayor Tom Barrett.
- 3) UW-Milwaukee has appointed a Veterans Advisory Council made up of staff and student stakeholders from diverse sections of campus. Recent work includes sensitivity training for faculty and staff, creation of a "for credit" writing and relaxation class just for vets, and an on-going project to create a more comprehensive and easier to use website with more resources from the campus and the community.

UW-Oshkosh

- 1) UW- Oshkosh football coaching staff and players assisted World War II veterans as they prepared for an Old Glory Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. Approximately 80 veterans from the region took a day-long tour of the D.C. memorials before returning to Oshkosh, where they were again were assisted by the UW Oshkosh volunteers. (2010)
- 2) UW-Oshkosh ranked 36 out the top 100 Best for Vets colleges nationally by Military Times Magazine for financial assistance, academic flexibility, and campus culture and support services. (2010

UW-Parkside

- 1) UW-Parkside and the WDVA co-hosted a Veterans Benefits Open House in 2010-2011.
- 2) UW-Parkside has a student group: Parkside Military Veterans Organization.
- 3) UW-Parkside has established a Veteran Services Improvement Work Group to analyze current veteran services and support; identify potential gaps in service; and develop recommendations for program enhancements.

UW-Platteville

- 1) UW-Platteville Teaching and Learning Center hosted panel for faculty and staff on Veterans in Our Classrooms: Understanding Military Service in January 2011 featuring student veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Over 40 faculty & staff attended.
- 2) UW-Platteville's FIRST Annual Veterans Week was held in November 2010 during the week of Veterans Day which included campus and community displays, lectures, and events.
- 3) UW-Platteville offered a course in Fall 2010 for veterans to transition from the military to the university will offer again in Fall 2011
- 4) UW-Platteville completed a campus-wide Veterans Needs Assessment in December 2010/January 2011
- 5) UW-Platteville hired a campus veteran as a Veterans Service Coordinator with the intention to expand services on campus and develop a proposal for a campus Veterans Center
- 6) UW-Platteville formed a committee to implement Veterans Resources during the campus resource fair at summer freshmen registration and new student orientation

UW-River Falls

1) UW-River Falls hosts an annual Veterans Fair to introduce veterans to campus resources and connect students to the VA Hospital, Fort Snelling and numerous military stations located near campus. (Ongoing)

UW-Stevens Point

- 1) UW-Stevens Point is sponsoring a lecture presentation by LTC Cynthia Rasmussen on "Reintegration from Combat", April 26, 2011, with a target audience of faculty, staff, veteran students, and other students.
- 2) UW-Stevens Point will offer a "Yoga for veterans" workshop in spring 2011.
- 3) UW-Stevens Point hosts a representative from the regional Vet Center to provide free walk in counseling several times each term.

UW-Stout

1) UW-Stout ranked 78 out the top 100 Best for Vets colleges nationally by Military Times Magazine for financial assistance, academic flexibility, and campus culture and support services. (2010)

UW-Superior

1) UW-Superior named a Military Friendly school by G.I. Jobs Magazine. According to G.I. Jobs, the ranking places UW-Superior in the top 15 percent of all colleges, universities and trade schools nationwide in services offered to veterans. (2010)

UW-Whitewater

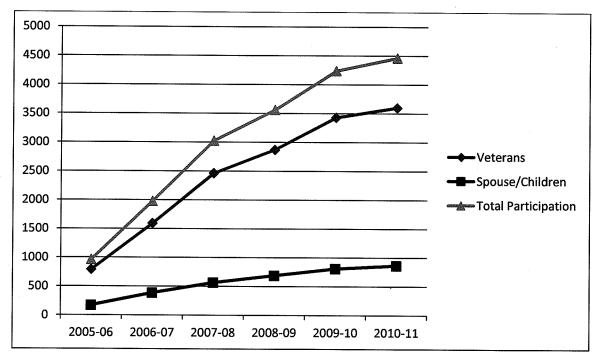
- 1) UW Whitewater provides a lounge for veterans inside the Anderson Library. The comfortable gathering space is equipped reading material and Skype-enabled computers that let veterans stay connected to relatives and friends in arms who remain stationed overseas. (2010, ongoing)
- 2) UW- Whitewater hosts an annual open house for veterans and salutes veterans with week of events including movie screenings, a resource fair, free football tickets and half-time recognition, free lunches and dining facility access and displays of historic military uniforms. (Annual)
- 3) UW-Whitewater has a Policy on Class Absences Due to Military Service: Students shall not be penalized for class absence due to unavoidable or legitimate required military obligations not to exceed two (2) weeks unless special permission is granted by the instructor. Students are responsible for notifying faculty members of such circumstances as far in advance as possible and for providing documentation to the instructor to verify the reason for the absence
- 4) UW- Whitewater offers an annual Art exhibit with reception that highlights various military themes each year. In 2011-12 we are again coordinating with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum to showcase the Shadow Boxes of fallen Wisconsin soldiers. We will be the first University doing this showcase.
- 5) UW-Whitewater keeps our deployed veterans active in our computer system for up to two years, including their deployment, so they do not have to readmit to the University upon their return to UW-W. While on deployment, they can access all their e-mail, computer applications or take classes, meet electronically with advisors and instructors.

UW-Colleges

- 1) <u>UW Waukesha</u> has an official campus veterans' club, the UW Waukesha Student Veterans Association. This organization meets weekly. It seeks to offer study groups, group events & outings, personal support, and promote community volunteerism. They sponsored a Veterans' Day speaker last November, 2010, inviting the Waukesha County Veterans' Service Officer, Thomas Ludka, to speak on campus, and held a social afterward, serving refreshments. They also sponsored a speaker in April, 2011, and invited both campus and community to attend. The speaker was Kevin Hermening, who spoke on "Liberty and Leadership".
- 2) The <u>UW Waukesha</u> Student Services Office has a student veteran on staff to help greet visiting veterans and give personal, vet-to-vet support to current student veterans on campus that need assistance from the office.



Figure 1: WTCS Participation in the Wisconsin GI Bill¹



¹Wisconsin GI Bill participation has increased 364% since program began in 2005-06.

Figure 2: History of WI GI Bill Costs in the WTCS

Fiscal Year	Number of WI GI Bill Students	WI GI Bill Costs ¹	Federal Post-9/11 Funding	State Funding ²	Locally- Funded Costs ³
2005-06	963	\$784,100	-	_	\$784,100
2006-07	1,977	\$1,750,000	-	_	\$1,750,000
2007-08	3,026	\$4,939,200	-	\$1,104,100	\$3,835,100
2008-09	3,562	\$6,088,900	-	\$1,444,600	\$4,644,300
2009-10	4,241	\$9,099,300	\$1,914,600	\$1,733,200	\$5,451,500
2010-11	4,466	\$9,967,000	\$4,611,200	\$1,825,000	\$3,530,800
TOTAL		\$32,628,500	\$6,525,800	\$6,106,900	\$19,995,800

¹Includes required tuition and fees remissions and supplemental payments

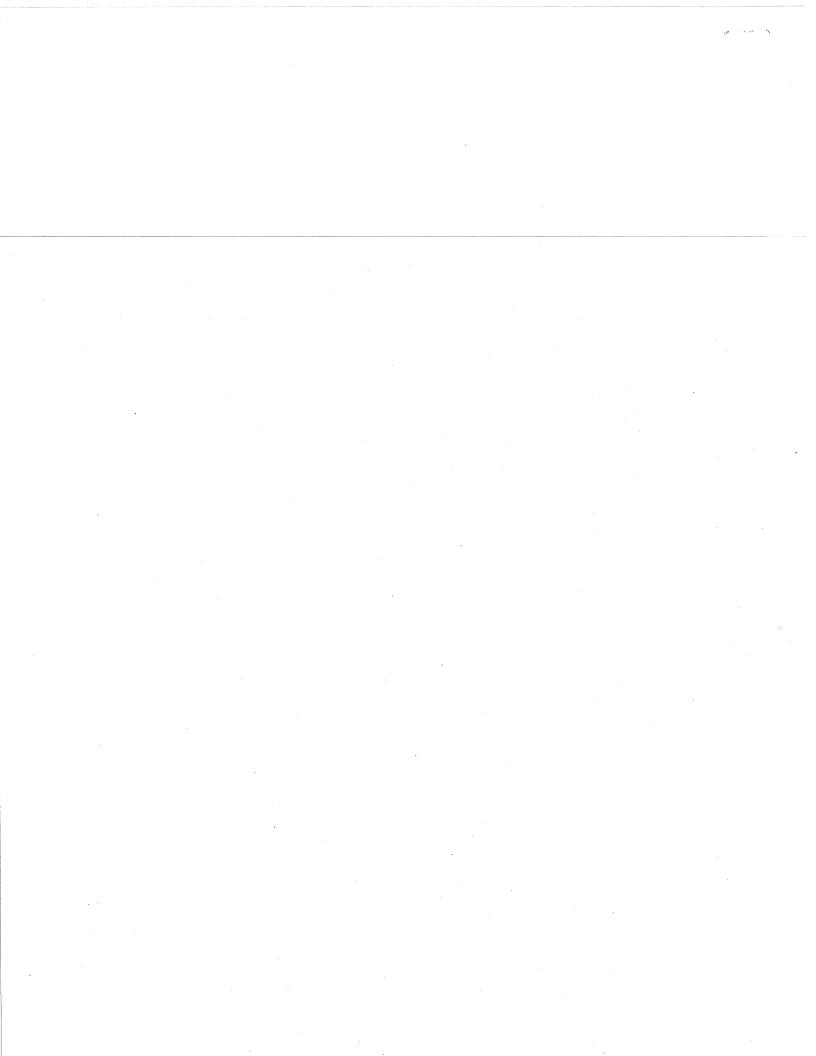
²Includes reimbursement of remissions and supplemental payment costs

³Local costs funded by non-WI GI Bill students and taxpayers



Figure 3: WI GI Bill Participants By WTCS College 2010-11

College	Veterans	Spouse/ Children	Total
Blackhawk	126	28	152
Chippewa Valley	140	62	202
Fox Valley	375	77	452
Gateway	305	68	373
Lakeshore	110	9	119
Madison Area	588	119	707
Mid-State	119	33	152
Milwaukee Area	504	105	609
Moraine Park	122	35	157
Nicolet Area	57	23	80
Northcentral	138	43	181
Northeast Wisconsin	342	88	430
Southwest Wisconsin	50	21	71
Waukesha County	272	5	277
Western	247	105	352
Wisconsin Indianhead	107	43	150
Total	3,602	864	4,466



STATEMENT OF
ALBERT W. LABELLE, JR.
LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
ON BEHALF OF SENATE BILL 53
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND VETERANS
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
WISCONSIN STATE SENATE
OCTOBER 5, 2011

Chairman Leibham, Ranking Member Lassa and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Disabled American Veterans, Department of Wisconsin, I am honored to present testimony to the Committee on Senate Bill 53.

First, however, I want to congratulate you, Chairman Leibham, on your selection to lead this great Committee. As a long-time constituent, I also want to say hello to the Committee's Ranking Member, Julie Lassa.

DAV, Department of Wisconsin looks forward to working with both of you, as well as the other members of the Committee, to see that the lives of our state's veterans, particularly disabled veterans, their families and survivors, are made better.

Since this is my first time testifying before the Committee, let me take a moment to briefly describe DAV and my background.

DAV is a non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-profit Veterans Service Organization founded in 1920 and congressionally chartered in 1932. It is the world's largest organization of wartime disabled veterans with over 1 million members nationwide. The Department of Wisconsin has over 15,000 members.

At the national level, DAV maintains state-level departments like ours here in Wisconsin and maintains more than 2,400 chapters, including 55 in our state.

Our congressional charter stipulates that DAV represents all of our nation's disabled veterans, including the more than 53,500 disabled veterans who reside in Wisconsin, even if they are not members.

DAV has one, single Mission is: "To build better lives for disabled veterans and their families."

The Mission is facilitated by a network of National Service Offices. These Offices are located in each of our 50 states and Puerto Rico. The Offices are staffed by National

Service Officers who are attorneys-in-fact. The Wisconsin National Service Office is located at the VA Regional Office in Milwaukee.

Other Outreach Programs include a Mobile Service Office, Informational Seminars, a Homeless Veterans Initiative, and a Disaster Relief Program.

Our signature Program is the DAV Transportation Network. The Network is administered by DAV Hospital Service Coordinators or HSC located at 172 VA Medical Centers throughout the country. In Wisconsin, DAV has a HSC at the VA Medical Centers in Milwaukee, Madison and Tomah.

Since 1987, DAV has donated over 2,700 vans to VA facilities nationwide. These vans have transported well over 13 million veterans to their VA medical appointments – free of charge. In 2010, the Wisconsin DAV Transportation Network drove, free of charge, over 23,000 veterans to VA Medical Centers for medical treatments.

For the past 6 years, I have made, on Capitol Hill in Washington DC, disabled veterans legislative presentations to Wisconsin legislators and their staff. Last year, I was honored to make a presentation to the staff of the House Budget Committee. I currently serve on the DAV National Legislative Committee.

For the past 3 years I have been involved on the periphery with disabled veterans' legislation in Madison, mainly as an observer. Last June, I was elected Legislative Director for the Department at the State Convention.

The Department's Legislative Program will always be based on resolutions passed at its annual State Convention and resolutions passed at the annual National Convention. Each committee member will shortly be receiving our 2011-2012 Legislative Program.

Our first exposure to Senate Bill 53 was at our District 5 Spring Conference, held at the Veterans Home at King on April 10, 2011. The keynote speakers for the Conference were Rep. Richard "Dick" Spanbauer, Chairman of the Assembly's Veterans and Military Affairs Committee and Sen. Julie Lassa, Ranking Member of this august Committee.

At the Conference, Sen. Lassa spoke eloquently and convincingly about SB 53. At that time, the Wisconsin G. I. Bill required the Board of Regents and a district board to grant full remission of academic fees charged for up to 128 credits or eight semesters, whichever is longer, less the amount of any academic fees paid under the federal Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008 for veterans, spouses, surviving spouses and children of certain veterans, as prescribed under Chapter 36, Chapter 38 and Chapter 39. SB 53 eliminated this unjust deduction.

SB 53 also changed the sum certain appropriated to the Higher Educational Aids Board or HEAB to a sum sufficient appropriation. Subsequently, SB 53 was amended to change

the sum certain appropriated to HEAB to an eventual sum sufficient with a capped sum sufficient used during the transition period.

The amended SB 53 also removed the elimination of the unjust deduction due to a provision in Act 32, a provision that DAV supported.

Currently, HEAB reimburses the Board of Regents and each district board for the amount of fees for veterans, spouses, surviving spouses and children of certain veterans. If the appropriated moneys are insufficient, HEAB is required to prorate the reimbursement to the Board of Regents and each district board.

Under the amended SB 53, the eventual sum sufficient appropriation requires HEAB to reimburse the Board of Regents and each district board for the full amount of fees remitted for veterans, spouses, surviving spouses and children of certain veterans on July 1, 2016.

SB 53 meets the criteria prescribed in Resolution 2011-07 entitled, "Support for the Wisconsin G. I. Bill Tuition Remission" passed at our annual State Convention in June. It has our support for the following reasons.

After exhaustive research of the Fiscal Estimates from the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System and consultation with the Legislative Council, in Fiscal Year 2010 approximately \$6.5 million was appropriated to reimburse the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System.

In Fiscal Year 2010, the total cost for the Wisconsin G. I. Bill was \$23 million, leaving a deficit of \$17 million that was absorbed by the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical System with reduced services and/or tuition increases.

Veterans, when they are in a war zone, defend the rights and freedoms of all the citizens in the State of Wisconsin, not just the rights and freedoms of the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Technical College System. The cost of their hard earned education needs to be shared equitably throughout the state, not be mainly borne by two state educational institutions.

More importantly, returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans need a welcoming environment to pursue their education, not one with the potential to foster resentment. With the spiraling cost of higher education, veterans do not need to be place in an environment where they may become a symbol. Most distressingly, some returning veterans sense a feeling of resentment from administrators, teachers and fellow students for the cost of college being high. This needs to be eliminated.

The veterans community has mainly received broad support from the public. This broad support does not need to fractured, because a segment of society is bearing the main brunt of educating these returning heroes.

E pluribus unum. Out of many, one. We are all one. As such, we need more equitable funding for the Wisconsin G. I. Bill. We support SB 53.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, this concludes my testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.